

NJ GEAR UP Scholarship FAQ for Students

Eligibility

Does every GEAR UP student get a scholarship when they graduate? What do I need to do to be eligible?

You must enter one of the NJ GEAR UP State Project Programs by 7th grade and continue each year through 12th grade. Your participation must be satisfactory to the program director. You must enroll in an associate or bachelor's degree program at a college or university in New Jersey.

If I transfer out of a GEAR UP target middle or high school, am I still eligible for the scholarship?

Yes. Once you become GEAR UP, you remain GEAR UP even if you transfer to another grammar, middle or high school. If you continue to participate in the program at a level acceptable to the program director, you can maintain eligibility.

Is the NJ GEAR UP scholarship based on financial need?

Yes, the scholarship is need based. Students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) each year to remain eligible for funding.

Can I postpone enrollment after high school and maintain eligibility for the GEAR UP scholarship?

Yes. Students may postpone applying for the scholarship and enrollment in college until the second fall semester following high school graduation. For example, if you graduate in June 2009 you have until fall 2010 to apply for the scholarship and enroll in college.

At which colleges can I use my GEAR UP scholarship?

You may attend a licensed degree-granting college or university in New Jersey. See

http://www.nj.gov/highereducation/colleges/schools_sector.htm for a list of eligible colleges. You may not use the scholarship at any out-of-state college or at technical or beauty schools that do not offer associate or bachelor's degrees.

Can I lose the scholarship after I am enrolled?

Temporary loss for the semester:

- Submitted the form after the June 1 deadline
- Did not make academic progress as determined by your institution
- Did not complete the FAFSA
- Did not comply with other requirements from the institution

Permanent loss:

- Enroll in an out-of state institution at any time
- Wait more than one year to apply for the scholarship and enroll in college
- Reach the maximum number of semesters allowed (4 for a 2-year institution; 8 for a 4-year institution)

Procedures

What should I do to get the scholarship?

- Your GEAR UP staff should be communicating with you about your eligibility for the scholarship. If not, check with the program staff to make sure you qualify. At a minimum, you have to have started as a GEAR UP student in 7th grade and continued participation each year through 12th grade.
- If you are eligible, the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) will mail a postcard to your home address on file *and* send an email to the account that you provide. We will no longer mail forms and letters. You must download the form from the GEAR UP website or get a form from your GEAR UP program staff.
- It is your responsibility to keep your address, and email updated with your GEAR UP staff.
- Submit the scholarship form to the CHE each year by the June 1 deadline. You **MUST** write in an eligible New Jersey college. Do not write "undecided" or leave the space blank.
- Complete the FAFSA each year.
- We strongly suggest that you send or fax your form directly to the CHE and not rely on anyone else to send it on your behalf. You are ultimately responsible for making sure it arrives on time.
- The funds will be sent in directly to the college on your behalf. If you attend in the fall, the funds will be sent to the same college in the spring unless you inform CHE that you will transfer.

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What if I didn't get the mailing?

We send information to the address and email that you provide. If they aren't returned undeliverable, we can only assume that you have gotten the mailing. Please be conscious of the June 1 deadline. If you haven't heard from CHE by May, see your program staff or download the form from the website. You are still responsible for submitting the form on time.

How will I know that you received my form?

If you provide an email address, you will receive confirmation that your form was received. You will also receive a letter from HESAA after the checks have been sent to institutions colleges. If you didn't get either or both of these things, we did not get your form. If you fax the form, make sure the status on the fax report says "OK" or some other indication that the transmission was satisfactory.

How do I get the money?

After you submit your form, the payments are made directly to the institution you are attending in July (for the fall semester) or December (for the spring semester). The financial aid office will verify your enrollment and eligibility before funds are applied.

Can I use the scholarship money to pay past due charges?

No. The scholarship is only to be used for current tuition and fees.

Can I enroll part time and still get the scholarship?

Yes, but your first semester has to be full time. After that, you may enroll part time. Your award may be prorated to reflect your credit load.

My school runs on a quarter or trimester system. How is my scholarship applied?

Your school will determine how to distribute the funds appropriately. You will still receive a total that equals the maximum Pell Grant amount.

Can I just go to financial aid and tell them that I'm a GEAR UP student?

No. You have to send your form to CHE before the deadline each year, even if you previously received the scholarship.

I submitted my GEAR UP scholarship form on time, but the award isn't showing up on my financial aid account; what should I do?

You will receive a letter and documentation from the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) that their payment has been sent to the college. Take the letter to the financial aid office at your college. If you still have issues, contact CHE with description of your problem, the name of the person you spoke to, and what he or she said.

Can I apply the scholarship to summer sessions?

No. The NJ GEAR UP scholarship is available for the academic year only.

What is amount of the GEAR UP Scholarship?

You may receive up to the maximum Pell Grant amount each academic year. Amounts will be prorated by the financial aid department based on your credit load if less than full time and are contingent upon availability of federal funding.

Does the GEAR UP scholarship pay for books and fees?

Yes, the GEAR UP scholarship can be used to replace the Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) to the cost of attendance, which includes books and fees. If your tuition does not exhaust the award, the remainder may be used to cover books and fees. Some college offer book vouchers to students. Contact the financial aid office at your college for details.